



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPRESENTATIVE DANIEL P. REILLY, *District 72*

Committee on Finance

Committee on Oversight

Committee on Rules

December 18, 2015

Her Excellency Gina M. Raimondo, Governor
Executive Chamber
State House
82 Smith Street, Room 119
Providence, RI, 02903

Dear Governor Raimondo,

Transportation is an integral component of our state. Bridge safety and the repair of our aging infrastructure represent a legislative focus of mine and a strong concern for my constituents. Rhode Island must act to halt the decline of our roadways. Yet, the magnitude of this project necessitates thorough research and transparent vetting.

I draft this letter seeking answers for my constituents. Not only are they concerned with transportation investment, but also, Rhode Island's level of indebtedness and spending. Months ago, you wisely instituted departmental reforms within the Department of Transportation. Has the Department prepared any report or document illustrating the progress of those reforms? Have the intended efficiencies materialized?

The Rhode Works program infuses hundreds of millions of dollars into the Department of Transportation quickly. Does the Department have the capacity and ability to efficiently manage this new money? Additionally, will the Department have the capacity to maintain the newly developed infrastructure once the bond and tolling funds have been consumed? Has the Department analyzed all potential avenues of construction? For example, public-private partnerships contracted as design/build/finance/operate/maintain may reduce management and operating risks for Rhode Island. Has the Department researched the usage of these partnerships to redevelop our infrastructure and lower future maintenance costs?

As currently proposed, Rhode Works modifies the route 6/10 connector. Multiple designs must have been studied for this antiquated infrastructure network; what are the respective proposals with their associated costs? One such proposal created a dedicated bus lane and expanded service to this area. Since fare-box recoveries cannot fully support RIPTA services, tax-payer subsidies are required to fill the budgetary gap. Has DOT or RIPTA conducted both usage studies and cost estimates for the additional bus services?

Furthermore, the Rhode Works program intends to repair bridges through tolling mechanisms. Has the Department conducted or subcontracted diversion studies, showing the change in traffic patterns as a result of these tolls? Which of our local roads will be most affected by the imposition of tolls and the diversion of traffic?

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Leveraging federal appropriations can help defer the cost of construction with our state. However, these funds generally have restricted uses, forcing Rhode Island to relinquish some project control with the acceptance of the federal funds. If Rhode Island accepted the \$400 million in federal grants as proposed by the Rhode Works program, what control would the state lose? What mandates and restrictions accompany these funds?

Recalling finance committee testimony, the federal appropriations are expected in the amount of \$400 million from the FTA Capital Investment Grant Program, which is commonly referred to as the FTA New Starts Project funding. The Federal Transit Administration requested only \$800 million for seven New Starts Projects in 2016. What is the likelihood that Rhode Island receives the expected \$400 million for our route 6/10 project? Rhode Island's portion would represent nearly half of the total annual allotment for the entire nation. Would Rhode Island be forced by the federal restrictions to create a bus lane, even if the federal government does not provide the expected \$400 million? How would the state fill any shortfall in federal funding?

Transportation is a very complex issue that impacts the lives of all Rhode Islanders. With diligent research and mutual collaboration, Rhode Island can effectively and efficiently repair its infrastructure, while promoting tax payer value. Thank you for attending to these questions. I look forward to this continued conversation that will strengthen Rhode Island for many years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Reilly', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Daniel P. Reilly
State Representative